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IVAR TIDESTROM, 1864-1956

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IVAR TIDESTROM, who prided himself on being a spiritual descendant and compatriot of Linnaeus, was born on September 13, 1864, on his father's estate "Lanna" in the parish of Hidinge, province of Närke or Nerike, Sweden, 12 English miles from the city of Örebro. His father's name was Constantin Tideström, his mother's maiden name Brita Ulrika Wallmo; they were both of good family. He was the third of five children, three girls and two boys. The father was an active and intelligent man and farmed the estate, to which a lime pit and lime-works belonged. Ivar went to school in Örebro, and even at an early age displayed interest in botany and in the rich flora of the calcareous soil around Hidinge. At school he incurred the dislike of a German teacher who would not promote him, and it is possible that some of his later antipathy for the Germans as a nation, rather than as individuals, had its origin in this circumstance. At any rate, not long after, in or about 1881, he ran away and came to New York. There all his baggage was stolen and at first he had a difficult time.

Soon after his arrival in this country he enlisted in the 8th Cavalry for service in the Southwest. Before signing up he gave the recruiting sergeant his true age (17), which was too young for enlistment. Seeing the applicant's intense desire for service, the sergeant told him to walk around the block, come back and represent himself as "18," and his name could be placed on the roster—which was done! In 1884 Tidestrom

injured his hip in a fall from his horse and left the Army temporarily but in 1887 he was back in the saddle again with the 4th Cavalry. In 1891 he started an engineering course at the University of California at Berkeley but became a student assistant to Dr. Edward Lee Greene and soon switched his major interests to botany. His relationship to Dr. Greene continued close and, shortly after Greene left California in 1895 to accept a professorship at Catholic University of America in Washington, D. C., Tidestrom joined him, receiving the degree of Ph.B. in 1897 from Cardinal Gibbons.

Tidestrom was an ardent patriot and a worshipper of "Teddy" Roosevelt, whom he followed in 1898 in the Spanish-American War in which he participated in the Battle of San Juan Hill, although he was not actually a member of the "Rough Riders." He always regarded himself as a soldier. When World War I broke out he wept because he was not permitted to reinlist, and he urged others to enter the military services before being drafted. It took constant urging before his pride would allow him to ask for the pension which was legally due him. Mustered out of the Army, we find him in 1903 as an assistant botanist in the old Bureau of Plant Industry, under the late Dr. Frederick V. Coville, at the munificent salary of \$40 a month. A year later, it might be added, Prof. Greene became an associate in botany at the Smithsonian Institution, the Curator of whose herbarium was Dr. Coville, who also was Botanist of the Bureau of Plant Industry in the U. S. Department of Agriculture. In 1910 Dr. Greene's salary was paid by the Forest Service to identify all but the grasses and sedges of the enormous number of range plants that were then being collected on National Forest ranges. Dr. Greene's comments on many of these collections by rangers and other forest officers largely untrained in the niceties of plant collecting were decidedly frank. He would write on a folder: "Umbellifers are never identified without fruit and are never collected by Forest Service men with them," or "It is impossible to imagine a more mildewed bale of hay than the enclosed." However, he did occasionally compliment a more careful collector and described perhaps a hundred new species from these collections. In those days such terms as ecotype, hybrid swarm, and polyploid were unknown in tax-

onomic circles and Greene would frequently write on a folder "New to me, hence new to Science," which was often an easy way to dispose of a specimen which could not be identified at sight. Or he would surreptitiously drop the specimen in a waste basket and observe that, "if the Almighty wished to preserve this plant creation, He could doubtless reproduce it again!" In fact, he did most of his determinations of Forest Service material before 9 o'clock in the morning, remarking that he, "the greatest living botanist," was being paid \$1200 a year by the Forest Service and they rated that sufficient recompense for his work!

Shortly before Greene's death in 1915, Tidestrom (still under Coville's direction and administrative control) succeeded to his chores for the Forest Service and, needless to say, did a thorough and conscientious job. To aid him in his duties he began work toward a series of western State Floras by preparing a mass of keys but, unfortunately, little of this was finished and hence it remained unpublished. Other unfinished tasks included floras of Alaska and the Aleutian Islands and monographs of *Astragalus* and *Hookera*, in the initiation of the latter of which the senior writer of this sketch participated.

Tidestrom was sometimes criticized by fellow systematists because he was not essentially a monographer although, as just indicated, he had done considerable preliminary work in monographing American *Astragalus* and *Hookera*, as well as *Populus*, a genus in which he took special interest. His first four publications (see bibliography below) were on ferns and fernworts. He is best known for his "Flora of Utah and Nevada" (1925). Before this flora appeared the senior writer of this sketch suggested to Mr. Tidestrom to do what Standley did, publish a list of the plants originally described from the area in which he was working. Apparently time did not permit and this probably accounts for some serious omissions, such as the failure to include the remarkable and nearly endemic genus *Blepharidachne*. Despite its rather skeletal character, particularly in its statement of ranges, and the frequent absence of one member of a presumptive pair of contrasting characters in the keys, this book has been a valuable working tool for botanists for more than 30 years and is still the only available

manual for the identification of specimens from Nevada as a whole, and a more convenient treatise than Rydberg's for material from Utah.

Tidestrom's larger and later book, the "Flora of Arizona and New Mexico" (1941), written jointly with Sister Kittell, unfortunately anticipated by but a year Kearney and Peebles' much more carefully elaborated "Flowering Plants and Ferns of Arizona," but was useful particularly because Wootton and Standley's "Flora of New Mexico" was more than a quarter-century old and long out-of-print. The typography of the book, reproduced by an offset process, was not pleasing, the family Oxalidaceae was omitted, the senior author took liberties with the nomenclature (for example, in restoring the pre-Linnaean *Pentastemon*), and these and other defects led to a bitter review in *The American Midland Naturalist*. Despite all this, it is probably safe to say that when he retired from the Department of Agriculture in 1934 there were few botanists who had wider first-hand knowledge of the flora of the entire United States than he did.

Tidestrom's first considerable publication was the beginning of a flora of Maryland, called "Elysium Marianum," of which three parts covering pteridophytes, gymnosperms, and some of the amentiferous orders appeared in 1906-10. It was illustrated with photographs, set up in type, bound, published and distributed by Tidestrom himself. This work allowed him to give his ideas and personality full sway. In his preface he remarks: "How much easier it is to appreciate the Good, the Beautiful and True about us, when we have some knowledge—be it ever so small—of plant life." He quotes from Seneca: "Si ad naturam vives, numquam eris pauper; si ad opiniones, numquam eris dives." And, from the 19th Psalm: "Coeli enarrant gloriam Dei, et opera manuum ejus annunciat firmitermentum;" he adds that such works "are in an equal measure applicable to Flora's realm." Tidestrom did not credit his beloved Linnaeus with such genera as *Pinus* and *Populus* but rather Plinius, as did his predecessor, Greene, in the latter's earlier floras of the San Francisco Bay region. Tidestrom credited Theophrastus with the authorship of the maidenhair fern genus, much to the approbation of Dr. Greene, who said

in his review in *The American Midland Naturalist*: "To Mr. Tidestrom's mind evidently to credit Linnaeus with *Adiantum* is to intercalate a children's fable into the midst of a page of science," and cited Baillon in further support of this thesis.

Tidestrom had a gift for friendship and hospitality. Anyone who has been his guest at his well-loved home, "Valhalla," in Maryland just outside the District of Columbia, will remember him as an outstanding host. His bonhomie and courtesy became proverbial. He was silent and respectful under Dr. Greene's sardonic humor. "Say juniper, Tidestrom," Dr. Greene would demand. "Yooniper, Dr. Greene" came the reply. The doctor would shake his head and declaim: "No Swede can speak English!" Once, when he was crossing a branch of the Potomac to a nearby island on a barge operated by hand from an overhead cable, some children tipped over the unstable craft, upsetting and completely immersing Tidestrom, pipe, beret and all. But he soon emerged laughing and completely unconcerned. Dr. Coville used to say "Tidestrom is a lot of fun!" He was a member of the Biological Society of Washington, the Washington Biologists' Field Club, the Botanical Society of Washington, and the Torrey Botanical Club.

Once, in describing a collecting trip down the Potomac River and Chesapeake Bay with a very eminent botanist, he said that, when night came, the person referred to removed his coat and shoes and lay down on the deck to sleep. "Ladies were going by," Tidestrom recalled with obvious shock; "I was embarrassed and spent the night sitting up in a chair. My father was a *yentleman* and he brought me up to be a *yentleman!*" And a certain Old World courtliness was inherent in the man, as he doffed his cap (usually a French beret) and was wont to bow on meeting people.

Tidestrom's first marriage ended unhappily, his wife leaving him for another man. A close friend reports that he spent an entire night with Tidestrom in a fortunately successful effort to prevent an armed attack on the seducer. Tidestrom later (1926) married the widow of a French veteran of World War I, Marie Demarest (1887-1944) of Normandy. They were a devoted couple. In her memory he wrote an ode, "V Day." Tidestrom was something of an amateur musician; he played

the piano and composed and had printed several pieces of a martial character. His last trip, when alone and quite feeble, in fact paralyzed on one side so that he could not walk without assistance, was to Sweden in the spring of 1954, for a family reunion—his first trip to his fatherland in 50 years. The 300 plants collected by him on that occasion with the assistance of his niece, Miss Amy Simonsson of Åsljunga (to whom we are indebted for the details of his early life), were later deposited in the U. S. National Museum collection where about 14,000 other sheets of his specimens are also filed. On his return trip he visited Washington for the last time and renewed old friendships.

Tidestrom was an avid reader. He loved France particularly and would often remark "Culturally, I'm a Frenchman."<sup>1</sup> After World War I he supported a French war orphan for a number of years. He was conversant with much of French literature and had a wide familiarity with the history of western Europe. He was quite a linguist, speaking, besides Swedish and English, French, Spanish, and German. He read Latin, Danish, and Norwegian well, and was, in addition, a student of such diverse languages as Arabic, Gaelic, and Russian.

Tidestrom was originally a Lutheran, later a Presbyterian, and became a convert to Roman Catholicism after his second marriage. He retired from the U. S. Department of Agriculture in 1934 at the age of 70, and thereafter served in the Botany Department of Catholic University under Dr. Hugh T. O'Neill for 5 years, retiring in 1939 and moving to Florida where he died at St. Petersburg on August 2, 1956. He was buried in Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Virginia, with military honors August 8, 1956. He is survived by a sister and two nieces in Sweden. He is commemorated in the genus *Tidestromia* Standl. of the Amaranthaceae and in a number of west-American herbs, including *Penstemon tidestromii* Pennell, *Pseudocymopterus tidestromii* Coult. & Rose, and *Viola tidestromii* Greene.

<sup>1</sup> Apparently his affection for France and things French led him to think and speak of himself as French to such an extent that most of his friends regarded him as partly of French extraction. His niece Miss Amy Simonsson, however, informs us that the Tideström family was Swedish, with some German admixture, for as far back as it can be traced, and that the only known French element is provided by a sideline in his mother's family, a sister of his maternal grandfather having married a French émigré to Sweden somewhere about 1800.

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## A REVISION OF THE VERNAL SPECIES OF HELENIUM (COMPOSITAE)

HOWARD F. L. ROCK

(continued from p. 158)

### 2. *Helenium vernale* Walt.

*Helenium vernale* Walt. Fl. Carol. 210. 1788. Lectotype: Herb. Walt. (BM), presumably collected by Walter at St. John's Parish, Berkely Co., S. Carolina, prior to 1788. Not examined; photographs seen (BM, GH).

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